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COMMITTEES WINDING UP

We have entered the final laps of this legislative marathon. At this stage, it's more of a semi-competitive barefoot cross-county race. Bills vying for passage need to have a quick pace (and a nice coating of grease) to cross the finish line at this point. The final 100-yard dash is in sight. Committees are beginning to wind down; most met for the final time this week. Next week they'll spend some time passing a balanced operating budget, which is their one constitutional obligation. There are two weeks left before we can catch our breath. We are going to power through until the last gavel bangs. We've had to stretch and flex a lot this session. We hope we won't need an ice bath to soothe our fatigued legislative muscles.

OMNIBUS HEALTHCARE BILLS STIR

There are two behemoth omnibus healthcare bills and neither saw much action this week. The House omnibus bill, [HB 2372](#), has been called from its Senate committee and awaits its turn for floor action in the Senate. The Senate omnibus healthcare bill took a hearty jog around the Senate floor on Tuesday. The copy machines were at risk of overheating due to the abundant interest in amending [SB 841](#) to add or remove various healthcare issues. We proposed a few ideas of our own to try to make the bill better. We were able to add some guardrails to the provision that allows the over-the-counter sale of ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. We also added physicians to the folks who can utilize the Food is Medicine waiver to prescribe whole fruits and veggies to patients.

These omnibus bills contain a little bit of everything: hospital and ambulance financing and board structures, anesthesia coverage, guardrails for AI in mental health, alpha-gal monitoring, telehealth license reciprocity, adaptive questionnaires, insurance coverage for doulas, and workplace violence, among others. Neither include prior auth reform... yet!

PRIOR AUTH REFORM STALLS AGAIN

Last week the Senate Insurance Committee heard [HB 3010](#), our prior authorization reform effort. Unfortunately, they did not meet this week, so there was no opportunity to vote on the bill and advance it out of committee. Passing a standalone prior auth bill is not looking good this year. Thank goodness for the amendment process.

Along those lines, there was a lot of squawking over prior authorization reform when an amendment that would establish a prior authorization application programming interface (API) for the Department of Insurance was introduced on the Senate floor (on SB 841). This is basically a uniform electronic program that runs prior auth requests and responses. It would require insurers to implement a prior auth API by 2028 (excluding prescription drugs). This means no more faxing. This amendment and other insurance mandates in the bill woke the insurance industry folks from their slumber, and they set to work trying to derail the bill. We also witnessed how quickly our allies were willing to turn on physicians. They were ready to fold to the insurance industry demand of a 93% gold-card threshold (up from 90%). They were also willing to exempt prescriptions and the Medicaid population from the bill. With “friends” like that, who needs enemies? We stood firm with the sponsor, who insisted those offers were unacceptable and would never leave physicians behind!

The bill was ultimately laid over and could return for debate anytime. However, with two weeks left, it will need to be significantly streamlined to make it through the process. The good to come from this exercise is that we now know with certainty where the opposition lies in the Senate. We also know our sponsor is a true champion for physicians. If SB 841 is used as a guide, we know where the snares lie when the House omnibus healthcare bill get its turn on the Senate floor.

OMNIBUS PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION BILLS ADVANCES

On Wednesday, the House Professional Registration Committee advanced [SB 1083](#). This is a large professional registration omnibus bill. It includes several provisions related to licensure. It also has language extending temporary license reciprocity to all licensed professionals, except those which operate under compacts. Physicians and physician assistants are exempt. Another provision of the bill would streamline the licensure process with the Board of Healing Arts.

On Thursday, the House passed [SB 1233](#), another mega professional registration and licensing bill. Most notable among the included provisions is our negotiated fixes to the physician assistant compact and license reciprocity for telehealth. Since the House made changes it must return to the Senate, where they can approve it as is, or send it to a conference committee to hash out their differences.

END OF SESSION WRAP UP

We will be bringing you all the stories on how the session played out on Sunday, May 17, at 6:00 pm via Zoom. Please register [here](#) to listen in as we spill the tea!